

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3016

INFO ALL CONSULATES IN MEXICO BY POUCH

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, MX

SUBJECT: LOPEZ PORTILLO CONFRONTS THE AGRARIAN QUESTION

1. SUMMARY: ON THE HUSTINGS IN THE HOTLANDS OF THE SOUTH, PRI CANDIDATE LOPEZ PORTILLO HAS LISTENED TO A CONSTANT STREAM OF COMPLAINTS ABOUT NEGLECT OF THE RURAL SECTOR AND "ABANDONMENT" OF AGRARIAN REFORM GOALS. YESTERDAY, HE WAS WARNED BY AGRARIAN LEADERS THAT A NEW ZAPATISTA ARMY OF CAMPESINOS MIGHT BE FORCED TO CORRECT MATTERS THROUGH VIOLENCE. BUT JLP STUCK TO HIS GUNS, REPLYING THAT A HIGH PRICE HAD ALREADY BEEN PAID IN BLOOD FOR REVOLUTIONARY INSTITUTIONS WHICH COULD AND SHOULD BE MADE TO SOLVE CAMPESION PROBLEMS PEACEFULLY. END SUMMARY

2. DURING HIS CURRENT CAMPAIGN TOUR OF GUERRERO AND MORELOS STATES, PRI PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE JOSE LOPEZ PORTILLO HAS COME UP HARD AGAINST WHAT IS PERHAPS THE MOST BURNING ISSUE ON THE CURRENT MEXICAN SCENE: AGRARIAN POLICY, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, AND THE PLIGHT OF LANDLESS CAMPESINOS. AT CHINAMECA, MORELOS--SITE OF THE ASSASSINATION IN 1919 OF AGRARIAN HERO EMILIANO ZAPATA-- THE CANDIDATE WAS TOLD IN MENACING TERMS OF THE DANGER THAT CAMPESINO FURSTRATIONS MIGHT SOON BE TRANSLATED INTO WIDESPREAD VIOLENCE.

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3. IN AN EIGHT-HOUR SESSION AT CHINAMECA FEB. 12  
ENDING JUST BEFORE DAWN, CAMPESINO CONFEDERATION(CNC)  
LEADER CELESTINO SALCEDO MONTEON READ A LONG APOLOGIA  
ON THE CANDIDATE'S BEHALF RECITING THE ACHIVEMENTS AND  
CONTINUING EFFORTS OF THE GOM TO RESOLVE AGRARIAN ISSUES,  
ELIMINATE LATIFUNDIA, REDISTRIBUTE LANDS, AND IMPROVE  
THE LOT OF THE CAMPESINO. ON ITS HEELS CAME AN ENDLESS  
SUCCESSION OF BITTEREST COMPLAINTS FROM CAMPESINOS  
THEMSELVES: "CONCEALED" LATIFUNDIA, ENCROACHMENTS BY  
LAND DEVELOPERS, ARMED ASSAULTS AGAINST CAMPESINOS,  
OFFICIAL CORRUPTION, THE GLACIAL SLOWNESS OF THE  
AGRARIAN REFORM BUREAUCRACY "SITTING ON 60 THOUSAND  
CASES AFFECTING OVER 3 MILLION CAMPESINOS", AND THE  
PLIGHT OF COUNTLESS CAMPESINOS WITHOUT JOBS AND WITHOUT  
HOPE OF SECURING THEIR OWN LANDS.

4. AT ITS CLIMAX, THE MEETING HEARD SOMETIME-DISSIDENT  
AGRARIAN LEADER HUMBERTO SERRANO (NOW A MEMBER OF THE  
OSTENSIBLY GOVERNMENT-LINING PACT OF OCAMPO) WARN THAT  
LEANDLESS CAMPESINOS CONSTITUTED A POTENTIAL ARMY OF  
LAND INVADERS "NOT UNLIKE THE ONE ZAPATA LED." IF THE  
CONTRASTS OF OPULENCE AND MISERY ARE NOT REMEDIED,  
SERRANO PREDICTED, "THE DAY WILL COME WHEN HUNGRY CAM-  
PESINOS WOULD OVERWHELM PRIVATE LANDHOLDINGS AND DO  
AWAY WITH PRIVILEGES. THESE INVASIONS CAN'T BE STOPPED,"  
SERRANO CONTINUED,"BECAUSE THE CAMPESINOS ACT OUT OF  
HUNGER, MISERY, AND DESPERATION, AND BECAUSE THEY ARE  
FED UP WITH YEARS AND YEARS OF USELESS APPEALS TO THE  
SSCRETARIAT OF AGRARIAN REFORM."

5. FINALLY, LOPEZ PORTILLO RSSPONDED: ZAPATA AND THE  
REVOLUTION HAD PAVED THE WAY FOR PEACEFUL, INSTITUTIONAL  
SOLUTIONS TO AGRARIAN PROBLEMS. CARDENAS AND NOW ECHE-  
VERRIA HAD RESCUED THE AGRARIAN MOVEMENT AND REFOCUSED  
GOVERNMENTAL CONCERN ON CAMPESINO PROBLEMS. AND EVEN  
NOW, THE PRI WAS UNDERTAKING A REVIEW OF ITS AGRARIAN  
IDEOLOGY WITH A VIEW TO "REVOLUTIONIZING THE REVOLUTION."

6. "NO, MY FRIEND SERRANO," JLP CONCLUDED,"THIS  
COUNTRY HAS ALREADY PAID--AND VERY DEARLY--THE PRICE  
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OF VIOLENCE. NOW WE HAVE LEGAL AND PEACEFUL MEANS,  
INSTITUTIONS, EXPERIENCE, AND CAPACITY TO RESOLVE  
AGRARIAN PROBLEMS WITHOUT THE NEED TO TEAR EACH OTHER  
APART. NOW IS NO TIME TO LOSE HOPE."

7. IN OTHER STATEMENTS IN GUERRERO AND MORELOS, LOPEZ  
PORTILLO HAD ALREADY MADE CLEAR THE NEED FOR PEACEFUL  
BUT VIGOROUS EFFORTS TO RESCUE THE CAMPESINOS. THERE

WAS STILL A NEED TO BREAK UP GENUINE LATIFUNDIA WHEREVER THEY ARE DISCOVERED, HE SAID, BUT "PULVERIZATION" HAD TO BE AVOIDED. PRODUCTION, AND NOT DIVISION, WAS WHAT WOULD BRING ABOUT RURAL WELLBEING. HIS EFFORTS, HE PROMISED, WOULD CONCENTRATE ON ORGANIZING CAMPESINOS EFFECTIVELY AND CREATING JOB OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH RURAL INDUSTRIES.

8. COMMENT: DESPITE DARK WARNINGS FROM SERRANO AND OTHERS, JLP HAS SO FAR RESISTED PRESSURES TO TAKE A MORE RADICAL STANCE ON AGRARIAN ISSUES(REDUCE LEGAL SIZE OF PRIVATE LANDHOLDINGS, ELIMINATE "AMPARO" PROTECTION AGAINST LAND CONFISCATION, COLLECTIVIZE EJIDOS, EVEN DO AWAY WITH PRIVATE LAND OWNERSHIP). INSTEAD, HE HAS FOLLOWED THE CURRENT ECHEVERRIA LINE, PROMISING IMPROVED ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES FOR CAMPESINOS AND MORE RESPONSIVE BUREAUCRATIC ACTION ON LAND TITLES. AGAINST THIS, HE HAS STRESSED MEXICO'S NEED FOR GREATER AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION--A NEED WHICH WILL MAINLY HAVE TO BE MET BY PRIVATE FARMERS. IN ATTEMPTING TO BALANCE THE TWO, AS HE MADE CLEAR AT CHINAMECA, VIOLENCE CAN ONLY PLAY A HURTFUL ROLE.  
JOVA

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